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HONEY-BEE

BY ANATOLE FRANCE

HONEY-BEE, PRINCESS OF THE DWARFS

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BY ANATOLE FRANCE

A TRANSLATION BY MRS. JOHN LANE

ILLUSTRATED BY FLORENCE LUNDBORG

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TO

H. B. H.

DEAR AND LIFE-LONG FRIEND

INTRODUCTION

IT is an honour, but, also, a great responsibility, to introduce through the dangerous medium of a translation one of the most distinguished writers of our time, and, probably, the greatest living master of style, to a new world—the world of childhood. One is conscious that it is as impossible to translate the charm and art of Anatole France as it is to describe in dull, colourless words the exquisite perfume of the rose.

Such as this translation is I offer it with diffidence, realising that I have undertaken a difficult task. And yet I venture to do so for I long to make known to English and American children one of the loveliest and noblest of stories —a story overflowing with poetic imagination, wisdom and humour, divine qualities to which the heart of the child is always open as the flower to the dew.

I want young children as well as others, older only by accident of years, but whose hearts are always young—which is the eternal youth—to know the greatest French writer of

his day, when, by the magic of his pen, he, like them, becomes young, gentle and charming. I want them to learn to love his "Honey-Bee," newest and sweetest of those darlings of child hood who have come down to us from bygone ages, distant lands and half-forgotten races, but who in their eternal charm appeal to all children since children first heard those wonderful stories or pored over treasured books that awaken the ardent young imagination to love, beauty, romance and goodness.

So, too, some day will "Honey-Bee," the golden-haired princess of the dear, good dwarfs, join her enchanting companions, Cinderella, Beauty and the Beast, Red Riding Hood, The Sleeping Beauty, The Frog Prince, Puss in Boots, Aladdin, and all the others of that immortal galaxy whose glorious destiny it has been to be beloved by childhood. May they welcome "Honey-Bee," youngest of all. And so the Master, supreme when he writes for men and women, will find open to him a new world, purer and more beautiful, in the hearts of English and American children.

E. L.

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I

Which treats of the appearance of the country and serves as Introduction

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HE sea covers to-day what was once the Duchy of Clarides. No trace of the town or the castle remains. But when it is calm there can be seen, it is said, within the circumference of a mile, huge trunks of trees standing on the bottom of the sea. A spot on the banks, which now serves as a station for the custom-house officers, is still called "The Tailor's Booth," and it is quite probable that this name is in memory of a certain Master Jean who is mentioned in this story. The sea, which encroaches year by year, will soon cover this spot so curiously named.

Such changes are in the nature of things. The mountains sink in the course of ages, and the depths of the seas, on the contrary, rise until their shells and corals are carried to the regions of clouds and ice.

HONEY-BEE

Nothing endures. The face of land and sea is for ever changing. Tradition alone preserves the memory of men and places across the ages and renders real to us what has long ceased to exist. In telling you of Clarides I wish to take you back to times that have long since vanished. Thus I begin :

The Countess of Blanchelande having placed on her golden hair a little black hood embroidered with pearls. . . .

But before proceeding I must beg very serious persons not to read this. It is not written for them. It is not written for grave people who despise trifles and who always require to be instructed. I only venture to offer this to those who like to be entertained, and whose minds are both young and gay. Only those who are amused by innocent pleasures will read this to the end. Of these I beg, should they have little children, that they will tell them about my Honey-Bee. I wish this story to please both boys and girls and yet I hardly dare to hope it will. It is too frivolous for them and, really, only suitable for old-fashioned children. I have a pretty little neighbour of nine whose library I examined the other day. I found many books on the microscope and the zoophytes, as well as several scientific story-

books. One of these I opened at the following lines: "The cuttle-fish *Sepia Officinalis* is a cephalopodic mollusc whose body includes a spongy organ containing a chylaqueous fluid saturated with carbonate of lime."

My pretty little neighbour finds this story very interesting. I beg of her, unless she wishes me to die of mortification, never to read the story of Honey-Bee.

II

In which we learn what the white rose meant to the Countess of Blanchelande

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AVING placed on her golden hair a little black hood embroidered with pearls and bound about her waist a widow's girdle, the Countess of Blanchelande entered the chapel where it was her daily custom to pray for the soul of her husband who had been killed in single-handed combat with a giant from Ireland.

That day she saw a white rose lying on the cushion of her *prie-Dieu;* at sight of this she turned pale; her eyes grew dim; she bowed her head and wrung her hand. For she knew that when a Countess of Blanchelande is about to die she always finds a white rose on her *prie-Dieu.*

Warned by this that her time had come to leave a world in which in so short a time she had been wife, mother and widow, she entered the chamber where her

son George slept in the care of the nurses. He was three years old. His long eyelashes threw a lovely shadow on his cheeks, and his mouth looked like a flower. At sight of him, so helpless and so beautiful, she began to weep.

"My little child," she cried in anguish, "my dear little child, you will never have known me and my image will fade for ever from your dear eyes. And yet, to be truly your mother, I nourished you with my own milk, and for love of you I refused the hand of the noblest cavaliers."

So speaking she kissed a medallion in which was her own portrait and a lock of her hair, and this she hung about the neck of her son. A mother's tear fell on the little one's cheek as he stirred in his cradle and rubbed his eyes with his little hands. But the Countess turned her head away and fled out of the room. How could eyes about to be extinguished for ever bear the light of two dear eyes in which the soul was only beginning to dawn?

She ordered a steed to be saddled and followed by her squire, Francœur, she rode to the castle of Clarides.

The Duchess of Clarides embraced the Countess of Blanchelande.

"Loveliest! what good fortune brings you here?"

"The fortune that brings me here is not good. Listen, my friend. We were married within a few years of each other, and similar fates have made us widows. For in these times of chivalry the best perish first, and in order to live long one must be a monk. When you became a mother I had already been one for two years. Your daughter Honey-Bee is lovely as the day, and my little George is good. I love you and you love me. Know then that I have found a white rose on the cushion of my *prie-Dieu.* I am about to die; I leave you my son."

The Duchess knew what the white rose meant to the ladies of Blanchelande. She began to weep and in the midst of her tears she promised to bring up Honey-Bee and George as brother and sister, and to give nothing to one which the other did not share.

Still in each other's arms the two women approached the cradle where little Honey-Bee slept under light curtains, blue as the sky, and without opening her eyes, she moved her little arms. And as she spread her fingers five little rosy rays came out of each sleeve.

"He will defend her," said the mother of George.

"And she will love him," the mother of Honey-Bee replied.

"She will love him," a clear little voice repeated, which the Duchess recognised as that of a spirit which for a long time had lived under the hearth-stone.

On her return to her manor the lady of Blanchelande divided her jewels among her women and having had herself anointed with perfumed ointments and robed in her richest raiment in order to honour the body destined to rise again at the Day of Judgment, she lay down on her bed and fell asleep never again to awaken.

III

Wherein begins the love of George of Blanchelande and Honey-Bee of Clarides

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ONTRARY to the common destiny which is to have more goodness than beauty, or more beauty than goodness, the Duchess of Clarides was as good as she was beautiful, and she was so beautiful that many princes, though they had only seen her portrait, demanded her hand in marriage. But to all their pleading she replied:

"I shall have but one husband as I have but one soul."

However, after five years of mourning she left off her long veil and her black robes so as not to spoil the happiness of those about her, and in order that all should smile and be free to enjoy themselves in her presence. Her duchy comprised a great extent of country; moorlands, overgrown by heather, covered

the desolate expanse, lakes in which fishermen sometimes caught magic fish, and mountains which rose in fearful solitudes over subterraneous regions inhabited by dwarfs.

She governed Clarides with the help of an old monk who, having escaped from Constantinople and seen much violence and treachery, had but little faith in human goodness. He lived in a tower in the company of birds and books, and from this place he filled his position as counsellor by the aid of a number of little maxims. His rules were these: "Never revive a law once fallen into disuse; always accede to the demands of a people for fear of revolt, but accede as slowly as possible, because no sooner is one reform granted than the public demands another, and you can be turned out for acceding too quickly as well as for resisting too long."

The Duchess let him have his own way, for she understood nothing about politics. She was compassionate and, as she was unable to respect all men, she pitied those who were unfortunate enough to be wicked. She helped the suffering in every possible way, visited the sick, comforted the widows, and took the poor orphans under her protection.

She educated her daughter Honey-Bee with a

charming wisdom. Having brought the child up only to do good, she never denied her any pleasure.

This good woman kept the promise she had made to the poor Countess of Blanchelande. She was like a mother to George, and she made no difference between him and Honey-Bee. They grew up together, and George approved of Honey-Bee, though he thought her rather small. Once, when they were very little, he went up to her and asked:

"Will you play with me?"

"I should like to," said Honey-Bee.

"We will make mud pies," said George, which they proceeded to do. But as Honey-Bee made hers very badly, George struck her fingers with his spade. Whereupon Honey-Bee set up a most awful roar and the squire, Francœur, who was strolling about in the garden, said to his young master:

"It is not worthy of a Count of Blanchelande to strike young ladies, your lordship."

Whereupon George was seized with an ardent desire to hit Francœur also with his spade. But as this presented insurmountable difficulties, he resigned himself to do what was easier, and that was to stand with his nose against the trunk of a big tree and weep torrents.

In the meantime Honey-Bee took care to encourage her own tears by digging her fists into her eyes; and in her despair she rubbed her nose against the trunk of a neighbouring tree. When night came and softly covered the earth, Honey-Bee and George were still weeping, each in front of a tree. The Duchess of Clarides was obliged to come and take her daughter by one hand and George by the other, and lead them back to the castle. Their eyes were red and their noses were red and their cheeks shone. They sighed and sobbed enough to break one's heart. But they ate a good supper, after which they were both put to bed. But as soon as the candle was blown out they re-appeared like two little ghosts in two little night-gowns, and they hugged each other and laughed at the top of their voices.

And thus began the love of Honey-Bee of Clarides and George of Blanchelande.

HONEY-BEE AND GEORGE WERE STILL WEEPING, EACH IN FRONT OF A TREE

IV

Which treats of Education in general, and George of Blanchelande's in particular

IV

Which treats of Education in general, and George of Blanchelande's in particular

O George grew up in the Castle side by side with Honey-Bee, whom he affectionately called his sister though he knew she was not.

He had masters in fencing, riding, swimming, gymnastics, dancing, hunting, falconry, tennis, and, indeed, in all the arts. He even had a writing-master. This was an old cleric, humble of manner but very proud within, who taught him all manner of penmanship, and the more beautiful this was the less decipherable it became. Very little pleasure or profit did George get out of the old cleric's lessons, as little as out of those of an old monk who taught him grammar in barbarous terms. George could not understand the sense of learning a language which one knows as a matter of course and which is called one's mother tongue.

He only enjoyed himself with Francœur the squire, who, having knocked about the world, understood the ways of men and beasts, could describe all sorts of countries and compose songs which he could not write. Francœur was the only one of his masters who taught George anything, for he was the only one who really loved him, and the only good lessons are those which are given with love. The two old goggle-eyes, the writing-master and the grammar-master, who hated each other with all their hearts, were, however, united in a common hatred of the old squire, whom they accused of being a drunkard.

It is true that Francœur frequented the tavern "The Pewter Pot" somewhat too zealously. It was here that he forgot his sorrows and composed his songs. But of course it was very wrong of him.

Homer made better verses than Francœur, and Homer only drank the water of the springs. As for sorrows the whole world has sorrows, and the thing to make one forget them is not the wine one drinks, but the good one does. But Francœur was an old man grown grey in harness, faithful and trustworthy, and the two masters of writing and grammar should have

hidden his failings from the duchess instead of giving her an exaggerated account of them.

"Francœur is a drunkard," said the writing-master, "and when he comes back from 'The Pewter Pot' he makes a letter S as he walks. Moreover, it is the only letter he has ever made; because if it please your Grace, this drunkard is an ass."

The grammar-master added, "And the songs Francœur sings as he staggers about err against all rules and are constructed on no model at all. He ignores all the rules of rhetoric, please your Grace."

The Duchess had a natural distaste for pedants and tale-bearers. She did what we all would have done in her place; at first she did not listen to them but as they again began to repeat their tittle-tattle, she ended by believing them and decided to send Francœur away. However, to give him an honourable exile, she sent him to Rome to obtain the blessing of the Pope. This journey was all the longer for Francœur the squire because a great many taverns much frequented by musicians separated the duchy of Clarides from the holy apostolic seat. In the course of this story we shall see how soon the Duchess regretted having deprived the two children of their most faithful guardian.

V

Which tells how the Duchess took Honey-Bee and George to the Hermitage, and of their encounter with a hideous old woman

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HAT morning, it was the first Sunday after Easter, the Duchess rode out of the castle on her great sorrel horse, while on her left George of Blanchelande was mounted on a dark horse with a white star on his black forehead, and on her right Honey-Bee guided her milk-white steed with rose-coloured reins. They were on their way to the Hermitage to hear mass. Soldiers armed with lances formed their escort and, as they passed, the people crowded forward to admire them, and, indeed, all three were very fair to see. Under a veil of silver flowers and with flowing mantle the Duchess had an air of lovely majesty ; while the pearls with which her coif was embroidered shone with a soft radiance that well-suited the face and soul of this

beautiful lady. George by her side with flowing hair and sparkling eyes was very good to see. And on the other side rode Honey-Bee, the tender and pure colour of her face like a caress for the eyes ; but most glorious of all her fair tresses, flowing over her shoulders, held by a circlet of gold surmounted by three gold flowers, seemed the shining mantle of her youth and beauty. The good people said, on seeing her :

" What a lovely young damsel."

The master tailor, old Jean, took his grandson Peter in his arms to point out Honey-Bee to him, and Peter asked was she alive or was she an image of wax, for he could not understand how any one could be so white and so lovely, and yet belong to the same race as himself, little Peter with his good big weather-beaten cheeks, and his little home-spun shirt laced behind in country fashion.

While the Duchess accepted the people's homage with gracious kindness, the two children showed how it gratified their pride, George by his blushes, Honey-Bee by her smiles, and for this reason the Duchess said to them :

" How kindly these good people greet us. For what reason, George ? And what is the reason, Honey-Bee ? "

"So they should," said Honey-Bee.

"It's their duty," George added.

"But why should it be their duty?" asked the Duchess.

And as neither replied, she continued:

"I will tell you. For more than three hundred years the dukes of Clarides, from father to son, have lance in hand protected these poor people so that they could gather the harvests of the fields they had sown. For more than three hundred years all the duchesses of Clarides have spun the cloth for the poor, have visited the sick, and have held the new-born at the baptismal font. That is the reason they greet you, my children."

George was lost in deep thought: "We must protect those who toil on the land," and Honey-Bee said: "One should spin for the poor."

And thus chatting and meditating they went on their way through meadows starred with flowers. A fringe of blue mountains lay against the distant horizon. George pointed towards the east.

"Is that a great steel shield I see over there?"

"Oh no," said Honey-Bee, "it's a round silver clasp, as big as the moon."

"It is neither a steel shield nor a silver clasp, my

children," replied the Duchess, "but a lake glittering in the sunshine. The surface of this lake, which seen from here is as smooth as a mirror, is stirred by innumerable ripples. Its borders which appear as distinct as if cut in metal are really covered by reeds with feathery plumes and irises whose flower is like a human glance between the blades of swords. Every morning a white mist rises over the lake which shines like armour under the midday sun. But none must approach it for in it dwell the nixies who lure passers-by into their crystal abodes."

At this moment the bell of the Hermitage was heard.

"Let us dismount," said the Duchess, "and walk to the chapel. It was neither on elephants nor camels that the wise men of the East approached the manger."

They heard the hermit's mass. A hideous old crone covered with rags knelt beside the Duchess, who on leaving the church offered her holy water.

"Accept it, good mother," she said.

George was amazed.

"Do you not know," said the Duchess, "that in the poor you honour the chosen of our Lord Jesus Christ? A beggar such as this as well as the good

"LET US . . . . WALK TO THE CHAPEL"

Duke of Rochesnoires held you at the font when you were baptized ; and your little sister, Honey-Bee, also had one of these poor creatures as godmother."

The old crone who seemed to have guessed the boy's thoughts leaned towards him.

"Fair prince," she cried mockingly, "may you conquer as many kingdoms as I have lost. I was the queen of the Island of Pearls and the Mountains of Gold ; each day my table was served with fourteen different kinds of fish, and a negro page bore my train."

"And by what misfortune have you lost your islands and your mountains, good woman?" asked the Duchess.

"I vexed the dwarfs, and they carried me far away from my dominions."

"Are the dwarfs so powerful?" George asked.

"As they live in the earth," the old woman answered, "they know the virtue of precious stones, they work in metals, and they unseal the hidden sources of the springs."

"And what did you do to vex them?" asked the Duchess.

"On a December night," said the old woman,

"one of them came to ask permission to prepare a great midnight banquet in the kitchen of the castle, which, vaster than a chapter-house, was furnished with casseroles, frying-pans, earthen saucepans, kettles, pans, portable-ovens, gridirons, boilers, dripping-pans, dutch-ovens, fish-kettles, copper-pans, pastry-moulds, copper-jugs, goblets of gold and silver, and mottled wood, not to mention iron roasting-jacks, artistically forged, and the huge black cauldron which hung from the pot-hook. He promised neither to disturb nor to damage anything. I refused his request, and he disappeared muttering vague threats. The third night, it being Christmas, this same dwarf returned to the chamber where I slept. He was accompanied by innumerable others, who pulled me out of bed and carried me to an unknown land in my nightgown. 'Such,' they said as they left me, 'such is the punishment of the rich who refuse even a part of their treasure to the industrious and kindly dwarf folk who work in gold and cause the springs to flow.'"

Thus said the toothless old woman, and the Duchess having comforted her with words and money, she and the two children retraced their way to the castle.

VI

Which tells of what can be seen from the Keep of Clarides

VI

Which tells of what can be seen from the Keep of Clarides

IT was one day shortly after this that Honey-Bee and George, without being observed, climbed the steps of the watch-tower which stands in the middle of the Castle of Clarides. Having reached the platform they shouted at the top of their voices and clapped their hands.

Their view extended down the hillside divided into brown and green squares of cultivated fields. Woods and mountains lay dimly blue against the distant horizon.

"Little sister," cried George, "little sister, look at the whole wide world!"

"The world is very big," said Honey-Bee.

"My teachers," said George, "have taught me that it is very big; but, as Gertrude our housekeeper says, one must see to believe."

They went the round of the platform.

"Here is something wonderful, little brother," cried Honey-Bee. "The castle stands in the middle of the earth and we are on the watch-tower in the middle of the castle, and so we are standing in the middle of the earth. Ha! ha! ha!"

And, indeed, the horizon formed a circle about the children of which the watch-tower was the centre.

"We are in the middle of the earth! Ha! ha! ha!" George repeated.

Whereupon they both started a-thinking.

"What a pity that the world is so big!" said Honey-Bee, "one might get lost and be separated from one's friends."

George shrugged his shoulders.

"How lucky that the world is so big! One can go in search of adventures. When I am grown up I mean to conquer the mountains that stand at the ends of the earth. That is where the moon rises; I shall seize her as she passes, and I will give her to you, Honey-Bee."

"Yes," said Honey-Bee, "give her to me and I will put her in my hair."

THE WATCH TOWER WHICH STANDS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CASTLE OF CLARIDES

Then they busied themselves searching for the places they knew as on a map.

"I recognise everything," said Honey-Bee, who recognised nothing, "but what are those little square stones scattered over the hillside?"

"Houses," George replied. "Those are houses. Don't you recognise the capital of the Duchy of Clarides, little sister? After all, it is a great city; it has three streets, and one can drive through one of them. Don't you remember that we passed through it last week when we went to the Hermitage?"

"And what is that winding brook?"

"That is the river. See the old stone bridge down there?"

"The bridge under which we fished for crayfish?"

"That's the one; and in one of the niches stands the statue of the 'Woman without a Head.' One cannot see her from here because she is too small."

"I remember. But why hasn't she got a head?"

"Probably because she has lost it."

Without saying if this explanation was satisfactory, Honey-Bee gazed at the horizon.

"Little brother, little brother, just see what sparkles by the side of the blue mountains? It is the lake."

"It is the lake."

They then remembered what the Duchess had told them of these beautiful and dangerous waters where the nixies dwell.

"We will go there," said Honey-Bee.

George was aghast. He stared at her with his mouth wide open.

"But the Duchess has forbidden us to go out alone, so how can we go to this lake which is at the end of the earth?"

"How can we go? I don't know. It's you who ought to know, for you are a man and you have a grammar-master."

This piqued George who replied that one might be a man, and even a very brave man, and yet not know all the roads on earth. Whereupon Honey-Bee said drily with a little air of scorn which made him blush to his ears:

"*I* never said *I* would conquer the blue mountains or take down the moon. I don't know the way to the lake, but I mean to find it!"

George pretended to laugh.

"You laugh like a cucumber."

"Cucumbers neither laugh nor cry."

"If they did laugh they would laugh like you. I shall go along to the lake. And while I search for the beautiful waters in which the nixies live you shall stay alone at home like a good girl. I will leave you my needle-work and my doll. Take care of them, George, take good care of them."

George was proud, and he was conscious of the humiliation with which Honey-Bee covered him.

Gloomily and with head bowed he cried in a hollow voice:

"Very well, then, we will go to the lake."

VII

In which is described how George and Honey-Bee went to the lake

VII

In which is described how George and Honey-Bee went to the lake

HE next day after the midday meal, the Duchess having gone to her own room George took Honey-Bee by the hand.

"Now come!" he said.

"Where?"

"Hush!"

They crept down stairs and crossed the courtyard. After they had passed the postern, Honey-Bee again asked where they were going.

"To the lake," George said resolutely.

Honey-Bee opened her mouth wide but remained speechless. To go so far without permission and in satin shoes! For her shoes were of satin. There was no sense in it.

"We must go and there is no need to be sensible."

Such was George's proud reply. She had once humiliated him and now she pretended to be astonished.

This time it was he who disdainfully sent her back to her dolls. Girls always tempt one on to adventures and then run away. So mean! She could remain. He'd go alone.

She clung to his arm; he pushed her away.

She hung about his neck.

"Little brother," she sobbed, "I will follow you."

He allowed himself to be moved by such touching repentance.

"Come then, but not through the town; we may be seen. We will follow the ramparts and then we can reach the highway by a cross road."

And so they went hand in hand while George explained his plans.

"We will follow the road we took to the Hermitage and then we shall be sure to see the lake, just as we did the other day, and then we can cross the fields in a bee line."

"A bee line" is the pretty rustic way of saying a straight line; and they both laughed because of the young girl's name which fitted in so oddly.

HONEY-BEE

Honey-Bee picked flowers along the ditches; s made a posy of marshmallows, white mullein, ast and chrysanthemums; the flowers faded in her lit hands and it was pitiful to see them when Hone Bee crossed the old stone bridge. As she did n know what to do with them she decided to thr them into the water to refresh them, but finally s preferred to give them to the "Woman without head."

She begged George to lift her in his arms so as to make her tall enough, and she placed her armful of wild flowers between the folded hands of the old stone figure.

After she was far away she looked back and saw a pigeon resting on the shoulder of the statue.

When they had been walking some time, said Honey-bee, "I am thirsty."

"So am I," George replied, "but the river is far behind us, and I see neither brook nor fountain."

"The sun is so hot that he has drunk them all up. What shall we do?"

So they talked and lamented when they saw a peasant woman approach who carried a basket of fruit.

"Cherries!" cried George. "How unlucky: I have no money to buy any."

"I have money," said Honey-Bee.

She pulled out of her pocket a little purse in which were five pieces of gold.

"Good woman," she said to the peasant, "will you give me as many cherries as my frock will hold?"

And she raised her little skirt with her two hands. The woman threw in two or three handfuls of cherries. With one hand Honey-Bee held the uplifted skirt and with the other she offered the woman a gold piece.

"Is that enough?"

The woman clutched the gold piece which would amply have paid not only for the cherries in the basket but for the tree on which they grew and the plot of land on which the tree stood.

The artful one replied:

"I'm satisfied, if only to oblige you, little princess."

"Well then, put some more cherries in my brother's cap," said Honey-Bee, "and you shall have another gold piece."

SHE RAISED HER LITTLE SKIRT WITH HER TWO HANDS

This was done. The peasant woman went on her way meditating in what old stocking or under what mattress she should hide her two gold pieces.

And the two children followed the road eating the cherries and throwing the stones to the right and the left. George chose the cherries that hung two by two on one stem and made earrings for his little sister, and he laughed to see the lovely twin fruit dangle its vermilion beauty against her cheeks.

A pebble stopped their joyous progress. It had got into Honey-Bee's little shoe and she began to limp. At every step she took, her golden curls bobbed against her cheek, and so limping she sat down on a bank by the roadside. Her brother knelt down and took off the satin shoe. He shook it and out dropped a little white pebble.

"Little brother," she said as she looked at her feet, "the next time we go to the lake we'll put on boots."

The sun was already sinking against the radiant sky; a soft breeze caressed their cheeks and necks, and so, cheered and refreshed, the two little travellers proceeded on their way. To make walking easier they went hand in hand, and they laughed to see their

moving shadows melt together before them. They sang:

Maid Marian, setting forth to find
The mill, with sacks of corn to grind,
Her donkey, Jan, bestrode.
My dainty maiden, Marian,
She mounted on her donkey, Jan,
And took the mill-ward road.*

But Honey-Bee stopped:

"I have lost my shoe, my satin shoe," she cried. And so it was. The little shoe, whose silken laces had become loose in walking, lay in the road covered with dust. Then as she looked back and saw the towers of the castle of Clarides fade into the distant twilight her heart sank and the tears came into her eyes.

"The wolves will eat us," she cried, "and our mother will never see us again and she will die of grief."

But George comforted her as he put on her shoe.

Marian' s'en allant au moulin,
Pour y faire moudre son grain,
Ell' monta sur son âne,
Ma p'tite mam'sell' Marianne!
Ell' monta sur son âne Martin
Pour aller au moulin.

"When the castle bell rings for supper we shall have returned to Clarides. Come!"

The miller saw her coming nigh
And could not well forbear to cry,
Your donkey you must tether.
My dainty maiden, Marian,
Tether you here your donkey, Jan.
Who brought us twain togeth

"The lake, Honey-Bee! See the lake, the lake, the lake!"

"Yes, George, the lake!"

George shouted "hurrah" and flung his hat in the air. Honey-Bee was too proper to fling hers up also, so taking off the shoe that wouldn't stay on she threw it joyfully over her head.

There lay the lake in the depths of the valley and its curved and sloping banks made a framework of foliage and flowers about its silver waves. It lay there clear and tranquil, and one could see the swaying of the indistinct green of its banks.

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* Le meunier qui la voit venir
Ne peut s'empêcher de lui dire :
Attachez là votre âne,
Ma p'tite Mam'sell' Marianne,
Attachez là votre âne Martin
Qui vous mène au moulin.

But the children could find no path through the underbrush that would lead to its beautiful waters.

While they were searching for one their legs were nipped by some geese driven by a little girl dressed in a sheepskin and carrying a switch. George asked her name.

"Gilberte."

"Well, then, Gilberte, how can one go to the lake?"

"Folks doesn't go."

"Why?"

"Because . . ."

"But supposing folks did?"

"If folks did there'd be a path, and one would take that path."

George could think of no adequate reply to this guardian of the geese.

"Let's go," he said, "farther on we shall be sure to find a way through the woods."

"And we will pick nuts and eat them," said Honey-Bee, "for I am hungry. The next time we go to the lake we must bring a satchel full of good things to eat."

"That we will, little sister," said George. "And

GILBERTE, THE GOOSE GIRL

I quite agree with Francœur, our squire, who when he went to Rome, took a ham with him, in case he should hunger, and a flask lest he should be thirsty. But hurry, for it is growing late, though I don't know the time."

"The shepherdesses know by looking at the sun," said Honey-Bee; "but I am not a shepherdess. Yet it seems to me that when we left the sun was over our head, and now it is down there, far behind the town and castle of Clarides. I wonder if this happens every day and what it means?"

While they looked at the sun a cloud of dust rose up from the high road, and they saw some cavaliers with glittering weapons ride past at full speed. The children hid in the underbrush in great terror. "They are thieves or probably ogres," they thought. They were really guards sent by the Duchess of Clarides in search of the little truants.

The two little adventurers found a footpath in the underbush, not a lovers' lane, for it was impossible to walk side by side holding hands as is the fashion of lovers. Nor could the print of human footsteps be seen, but only indentations left by innumerable tiny cloven feet.

"Those are the feet of little devils," said Honey-Bee.

"Or deer," suggested George.

The matter was never explained. But what is certain is that the footpath descended in a gentle slope towards the edge of the lake which lay before the two children in all its languorous and silent beauty. The willows surrounded its banks with their tender foliage. The slender blades of the reeds with their delicate plumes swayed lightly over the water. They formed tremulous islands about which the water-lilies spread their great heart-shaped leaves and snow-white flowers. Over these blossoming islands dragon-flies, all emerald or azure, with wings of flame, sped their shrill flight in suddenly altered curves.

The children plunged their burning feet with joy in the damp sand overgrown with tufted horse-tails and the reed-mace with its slender lance. The sweet flag wafted towards them its humble fragrance and the water plantain unrolled about them its filaments of lace on the margin of the sleeping waters which the willow-herb starred with its purple flowers.

VIII

Wherein we shall see what happened to George of Blanchelande because he approached the lake in which the nixies dwell

OVERHEAD SHE SAW A LITTLE DWARF MOUNTED ON A RAVEN

VIII

Wherein we shall see what happened to George of Blanchelande because he approached the lake in which the nixies dwell

HONEY-BEE crossed the sand between two clumps of willows, and the little spirit of the place leaped into the water in front of her, leaving circles that grew greater and greater and finally vanished. This spirit was a little green frog with a white belly. All was silent; a fresh breeze swept over the clear lake whose every ripple had the gracious curve of a smile.

"This lake is pretty," said Honey-Bee, "but my feet are bleeding in my little torn shoes, and I am very hungry. I wish I were back in the castle."

"Little sister," said George, "sit down on the grass. I will wrap your feet in leaves to cool them; then I will go in search of supper for you. High up along the road I saw some ripe blackberries. I will

fetch you the sweetest and best in my hat. Give me your handkerchief; I will fill it with strawberries, for there are strawberries near here along the footpath under the shade of the trees. And I will fill my pockets with nuts."

He made a bed of moss for Honey-Bee under a willow on the edge of the lake, and then he left her.

Honey-Bee lay with folded hands on her little mossy bed and watched the light of the first stars tremble in the pale sky; then her eyes half closed, and yet it seemed to her as if overhead she saw a little dwarf mounted on a raven. It was not fancy. For having reined in the black bird who was gnawing at the bridle, the dwarf stopped just above the young girl and stared down at her with his round eyes. Whereupon he disappeared at full gallop. All this Honey-Bee saw vaguely and then she fell asleep.

She was still asleep when George returned with the fruit he had gathered, which he placed at her side. Then he climbed down to the lake while he waited for her to awaken. The lake slept under its delicate crown of verdure. A light mist swept softly over the waters. Suddenly the moon appeared between the

THE NIXIES

branches, and then the waves were strewn as if with countless stars.

But George could see that the lights which irradiated the waters were not all the broken reflections of the moon, for blue flames advanced in circles, swaying and undulating as if in a dance. Soon he saw that the blue flames flickered over the white faces of women, beautiful faces rising on the crests of the waves and crowned with sea-weeds and sea-shells, with sea-green tresses floating over their shoulders and veils flowing from under their breasts that shimmered with pearls. The child recognised the nixies and tried to flee. But already their cold white arms had seized him, and in spite of his struggles and cries he was borne across the waters along the galleries of porphyry and crvstal.

IX

Wherein we shall see how Honey-Bee was taken to the dwarfs

IX

Wherein we shall see how Honey-Bee was taken to the dwarfs

THE moon had risen over the lake and the water now only showed broken reflections of its disc. Honey-Bee still slept. The dwarf who had watched her came back again on his raven followed this time by a crowd of little men. They were very little men. Their white beards hung down to their knees. They looked like old men with the figures of children. By their leathern aprons and the hammers which hung from their belts one could see that they were workers in metals. They had a curious gait, for they leaped to amazing heights and turned the most extraordinary somersaults, and showed the most inconceivable agility that made them seem more like spirits than human beings.

Yet while cutting their most foolhardy capers they preserved an unalterable gravity of demeanour, to such

a degree that it was quite impossible to make out their real characters.

They placed themselves in a circle about the sleeping child.

"Now then," said the smallest of the dwarfs from the heights of his plumed charger; "now then, did I deceive you when I said that the loveliest of princesses was lying asleep on the borders of the lake, and do you not thank me for bringing you here?"

"We thank you, Bob," replied one of the dwarfs who looked like an elderly poet, "indeed there is nothing lovelier in the world than this young damsel. She is more rosy than the dawn which rises on the mountains, and the gold we forge is not so bright as the gold of her tresses."

"Very good, Pic, nothing can be truer," cried the dwarfs, "but what shall we do with this lovely little lady?"

Pic, who looked like a very elderly poet, did not reply to this question, probably because he knew no better than they what to do with this pretty lady.

"Let us build a large cage and put her in," a dwarf by the name of Rug suggested.

Against this another dwarf called Dig vehemently

protested. It was Dig's opinion that only wild beast were ever put into cages, and there was nothing yet to prove that the pretty lady was one of these.

But Rug clung to his idea for the reason possibly that he had no other. He defended it with much subtlety. Said he :

"If this person is not savage she will certainly become so as a result of the cage, which will be therefore not only useful but indispensable."

This reasoning displeased the dwarfs, and one of them named Tad denounced it with much indignation. He was such a good dwarf. He proposed to take the beautiful child back to her kindred who must be great nobles.

But this advice was rejected as being contrary to the custom of the dwarfs.

"We ought to follow the ways of justice, not custom," said Tad.

But no one paid any further attention to him and the assembly broke into a tumult as a dwarf named Pau, a simple soul but just, gave his advice in these terms :

"We must begin by awakening this young lady, seeing she declines to awake of herself ; if she spends

the night here her eyelids will be swollen to-morrow and her beauty will be much impaired, for it is very unhealthy to sleep in a wood on the borders of a lake."

This opinion met with general approval as it did not clash with any other.

Pic, who looked like an elderly poet burdened with care, approached the young girl and looked at her very intently, under the impression that a single one of his glances would be quite sufficient to rouse the dreamer out of the deepest sleep. But Pic was quite mistaken as to the power of his glance, for Honey-Bee continued to sleep with folded hands.

Seeing this the good Tad pulled her gently by her sleeve. Thereupon she partly opened her eyes and raised herself on her elbow. When she found herself lying on a bed of moss surrounded by dwarfs she thought what she saw was nothing but a dream, and she rubbed her eyes to open them, so that instead of this fantastic vision she should see the pure light of morning as it entered her little blue room in which she thought she was. For her mind, heavy with sleep, did not recall to her the adventure of the lake. But indeed, it was useless to rub her eyes, the dwarfs did not vanish, and so she was obliged to believe that they were real.

Then she looked about with frightened eyes and saw the forest and remembered.

"George! my brother George!" she cried in anguish. The dwarfs crowded about her, and for fear of seeing them she hid her face in her hands.

"George! George! Where is my brother George?" she sobbed.

The dwarfs could not tell her, for the good reason that they did not know. And she wept hot tears and cried aloud for her mother and brother.

Pau longed to weep with her, and in his efforts to console, he addressed her with rather vague remarks.

"Do not distress yourself so much," he urged, "it would be a pity for so lovely a young damsel to spoil her eyes with weeping. Rather tell us your story, which cannot fail to be very amusing. We should be so pleased."

She did not listen. She rose and tried to escape. But her bare and swollen feet caused her such pain that she fell on her knees, sobbing most pitifully. Tad held her in his arms, and Pau tenderly kissed her hand. It was this that gave her the courage to look at them, and she saw that they seemed full of compassion.

Pic looked to her like one inspired, and yet very

innocent, and perceiving that all these little men were full of compassion for her, she said :

" Little men, it is a pity you are so ugly, but I will love you all the same if you will only give me something to eat, for I am so hungry."

" Bob," all the dwarfs cried at once, " go and fetch some supper."

And Bob flew off on his raven. All the same, the dwarfs resented this small girl's injustice in finding them ugly. Rug was very angry. Pic said to himself, " She is only a child, and she does not see the light of genius which shines in my eyes, and which gives them the power which crushes as well as the grace which charms."

As for Pau, he thought to himself: " Perhaps it would have been better if I had not awakened this young lady who finds us ugly." But Tad said smiling :

" You will find us less ugly, dear young lady, when you love us more."

As he spoke Bob re-appeared on his raven. He held a dish of gold on which were a roast pheasant, an oatmeal cake, and a bottle of claret. He cut innumerable capers as he laid this supper at the feet of Honey-Bee.

"Little men," Honey-Bee said as she ate, "your supper is very good. My name is Honey-Bee; let us go in search of my brother, and then we will all go together to Clarides where mama is waiting for us in great anxiety."

But Dig, who was a kind dwarf, represented to Honey-Bee that she was not able to walk; that her brother was big enough to find his own way; that no misfortune could come to him in a country in which all the wild beasts had been destroyed.

"We will make a litter," he added, "and cover it with leaves and moss, and we will put you on it, and in this way we will carry you to the mountain and present you to the King of the Dwarfs, according to the custom of our people."

All the dwarfs applauded. Honey-Bee looked at her aching feet and remained silent. She was glad to learn that there were no wild beasts in the country. And on the whole she was willing to trust herself to the kindness of the dwarfs.

They were already busy constructing the litter. Those with hatchets were felling two young fir trees with resounding blows. This brought back to Rug his original suggestion.

"If instead of a litter we made a cage," he urged.

But he aroused a unanimous protest. Tad looked at him scornfully.

"You are more like a human being than a dwarf, Rug," he said. "But at least it is to the honour of our race that the most wicked dwarf is also the most stupid."

In the meantime the task had been accomplished. The dwarfs leaped into the air and in a bound seized and cut the branches, out of which they deftly wove a basket chair. Having covered it with moss and leaves, they placed Honey-Bee upon it, then they seized the two poles, placed them on their shoulders and, then! off they went to the mountain.

X

In which we are faithfully told how King Loc received Honey-Bee of Clarides

X

In which we are faithfully told how King Loc received Honey-Bee of Clarides

THEY climbed a winding path along the wooded slope of the hill. Here and there granite boulders, bare and blasted, broke through the grey verdure of the dwarf oaks, and the sombre purple mountain with its bluish ravines formed an impassable barrier about the desolate landscape.

The procession, preceded by Bob on his feathered steed, passed through a chasm overgrown with brambles. Honey-Bee, with her golden hair flowing over her shoulders, looked like the dawn breaking on the mountains, supposing, of course, that the dawn was ever frightened and called her mother and tried to escape, for all these things she did as she caught a confused glimpse of dwarfs, armed to the teeth, lying in ambush along the windings of the rocks.

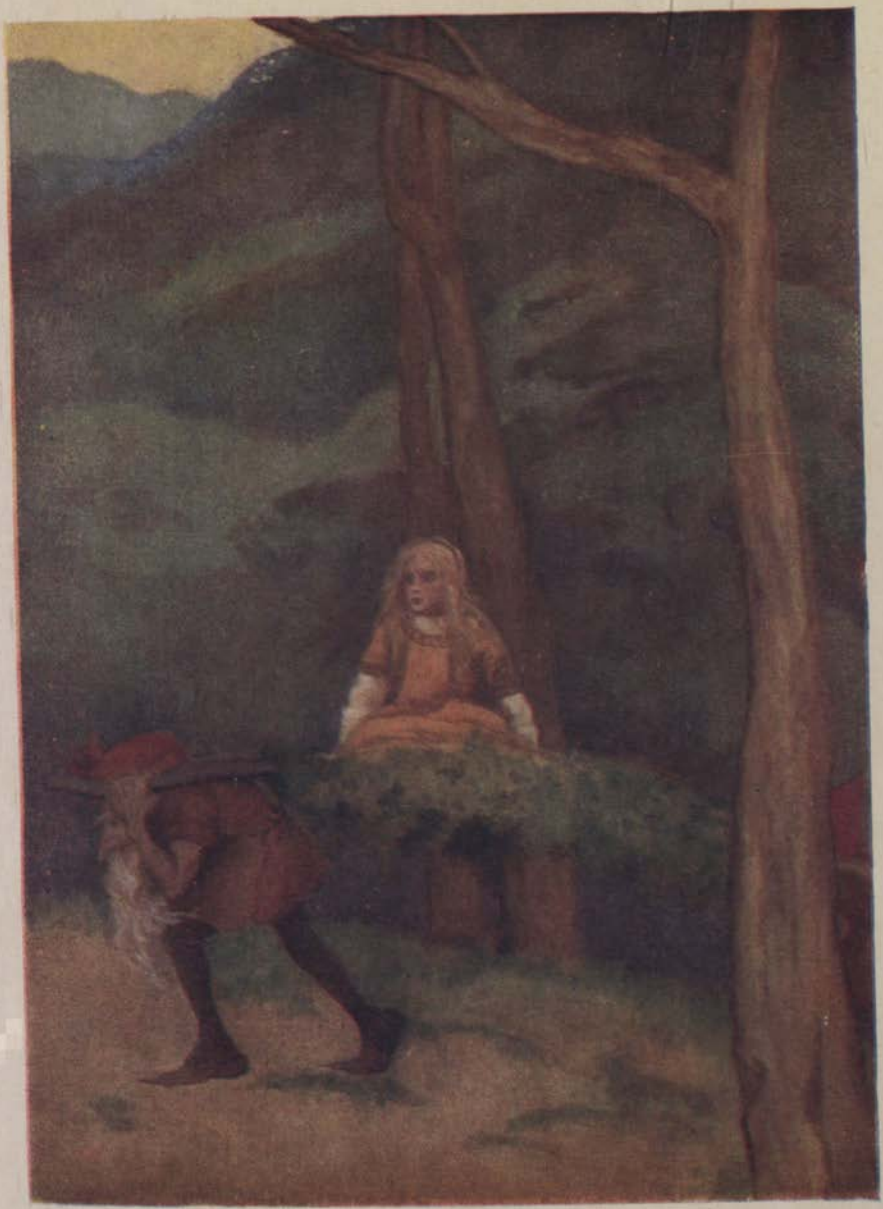
With bows bent or lance at rest they stood immovable. Their tunics of wild beast skins and their long knives that hung from their belts gave them a most terrible appearance. Game, furred and feathered, lay beside them. And yet these huntsmen, to judge only by their faces, did not seem very grim; on the contrary, they appeared gentle and grave like the dwarfs of the forest, whom they greatly resembled.

In their midst stood a dwarf full of majesty. He wore a cock feather over his ear, and on his head a diadem set with enormous gems. His mantle raised at the shoulder disclosed a muscular arm covered with circlets of gold. A horn of ivory and chased silver hung from his belt. His left hand rested on his lance in an attitude of quiet strength, and his right he held over his eyes so as to look towards Honey-Bee and the light.

"King Loc," said the forest dwarfs, "we have brought you the beautiful child we have found; her name is Honey-Bee."

"You have done well," said King Loc. "She shall live amongst us according to the custom of the dwarfs."

"Honey-Bee," he said, approaching her, "you are



THEY CLIMBED A WINDING PATH ALONG THE WOODED SLOPE OF THE HILL

welcome." He spoke very gently, for he already felt very kindly towards her. He lifted himself on the tips of his toes to kiss her hand that hung at her side, and he assured her not only that he would do her no harm, but that he would try to gratify all her wishes, even should she long for necklaces, mirrors, stuffs from Cashmere and silks from China.

"I wish I had some shoes," replied Honey-Bee. Upon which King Loc struck his lance against a bronze disc that hung on the surface of the rock, and instantly something bounded like a ball out of the depths of the cavern. Increasing in size it disclosed the face of a dwarf with features such as painters give to the illustrious Belisarius, but his leather apron proclaimed that he was a shoemaker. He was indeed the chief of the shoemakers.

"Truc," said the king, "choose the softest leather out of our store-houses, take cloth-of-gold and silver, ask the guardian of my treasures for a thousand pearls of the finest water, and with this leather, these fabrics, and these pearls create a pair of shoes for the lady Honey-Bee."

At these words Truc threw himself at the feet of Honey-Bee and measured them with great care.

"Little King Loc," said Honey-Bee, "I want the pretty shoes you promised at once, because as soon as I have them I must return to Clarides to my mother."

"You shall have the shoes," King Loc replied; "you shall have them to walk about the mountain, but not to return to Clarides, for never again shall you leave this kingdom, where we will teach you wonderful secrets still unknown on earth. The dwarfs are superior to men, and it is your good fortune that you are made welcome amongst them."

"It is my misfortune," replied Honey-Bee. "Little King Loc, give me a pair of wooden shoes, such as the peasants wear, and let me return to Clarides."

But King Loc made a sign with his head to signify that this was impossible. Then Honey-Bee clasped her hands and said, coaxingly:

"Little King Loc, let me go and I will love you very much."

"You will forget me in your shining world."

"Little King Loc, I will never forget you, and I will love you as much as I love Flying Wind."

"And who is Flying Wind?"

"It is my milk-white steed, and he has rose-

coloured reins and he eats out of my hand. When he was very little Francœur the squire used to bring him to my room every morning and I kissed him. But now Francœur is in Rome, and Flying Wind is too big to mount the stairs."

King Loc smiled.

"Will you love me more than Flying Wind?"

"Indeed I would," said Honey-Bee.

"Well said," cried the King.

"Indeed I would, but I cannot, I hate you, little King Loc, because you will not let me see my mother and George again."

"Who is George?"

"George is George and I love him."

The friendship of King Loc for Honey-Bee had increased prodigiously in a few minutes, and as he had already made up his mind to marry her as soon as she was of age, and hoped through her to reconcile men and dwarfs, he feared that later on George might become his rival and wreck his plans. It was because of this that he turned away frowning, his head bowed as if with care.

Honey-Bee seeing that she had offended him pulled him gently by his mantle.

"Little King Loc," she said, in a voice both tender and sad, "why should we make each other unhappy, you and I?"

"It is in the nature of things," replied King Loc. "I cannot take you back to your mother, but I will send her a dream which will tell her your fate, dear Honey-Bee, and that will comfort her."

"Little King Loc," and Honey-Bee smiled through her tears, "what a good idea, but I will tell you just what you ought to do. You must send my mother a dream every night in which she will see me, and every night you must send me a dream in which I shall see her."

And King Loc promised, and so said, so done. Every night Honey-Bee saw her mother, and every night the Duchess saw her daughter, and that satisfied their love just a little.

XI

In which the marvels of the kingdom of the dwarfs are accurately described, as well as the dolls that were given to Honey-Bee

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In which the marvels of the kingdom of the dwarfs are accurately described, as well as the dolls that were given to Honey-Bee

HE kingdom of the dwarfs was very deep and extended under the greater part of the earth. Though one only caught a glimpse of the sky here and there through the clefts in the rocks, the roads, the avenues, the palaces and the galleries of this subterraneous region were not plunged in absolute darkness. Only a few spaces and caverns were lost in obscurity. The rest was illumined not by lamps or torches but by stars or meteors which diffused a strange and fantastic light, and this light revealed the most astonishing marvels. One saw stupendous edifices hewn out of the solid rocks, and in some places, palaces cut out of granite, of such height that their tracery of stone was lost under the arches of this gigantic cavern in a haze

across which fell the orange glimmer of little stars less lustrous than the moon.

There were fortresses in this kingdom, of the most crushing and formidable dimensions; an amphitheatre in which the stone seats formed a half-circle whose extent it was impossible to measure at a single glance, and vast wells with sculptured sides, in which one could descend forever and yet never reach the bottom. All these structures, so out of proportion it would seem to the size of the inhabitants, were quite in keeping with their curious and fantastic genius.

Dwarfs in pointed hoods pricked with fern leaves whirled about these edifices in the airiest fashion. It was common to see them leap up to the height of two or three storeys from the lava pavement and rebound like balls, their faces meanwhile preserving that impressive dignity with which sculptors endow the great men of antiquity.

No one was idle and all worked zealously. Entire districts echoed to the sound of hammers. The shrill discord of machinery broke against the arches of the cavern, and it was a curious sight to see the crowds of miners, blacksmiths, gold-beaters, jewellers, diamond polishers handle pickaxes, hammers, pincers and files

with the dexterity of monkeys. However there was a more peaceful region.

Here coarse and powerful figures and shapeless columns loomed in chaotic confusion, hewn out of the virgin rock, and seemed to date back to an immemorial antiquity. Here a palace with low portals extended its ponderous expanse; it was the palace of King Loc.

Directly opposite was the house of Honey-Bee, a house or rather a cottage of one room all hung with white muslin. The furniture of pine-wood perfumed the room. A glimpse of daylight penetrated through a crevice in the rock, and on fine nights one could see the stars.

Honey-Bee had no special attendants, for all the dwarf people were eager to serve her and to anticipate all her wishes except the single one to return to earth.

The most erudite dwarfs, familiar with the profoundest secrets, were glad to teach her, not from books, for dwarfs do not write, but by showing her all the plants of mountains and plains, all the diverse species of animals, and all the varied gems that are extracted from the bosom of the earth. And it was by means of such sights and marvels that they taught her,

with an innocent gaiety, the wonders of nature and the processes of the arts.

They made her playthings such as the richest children on earth never have; for these dwarfs were always industrious and invented wonderful machinery. In this way they produced for her dolls that could move with exquisite grace, and express themselves according to the strictest rules of poetry. Placed on the stage of a little theatre, the scenery of which represented the shores of the sea, the blue sky, palaces and temples, they would portray the most interesting events. Though no taller than a man's arm some of them represented respectable old men, others men in the prime of life, and, others still, beautiful young girls dressed in white.

Among them also were mothers pressing their innocent children to their hearts. And these eloquent dolls acted as if they were really moved by hate, love and ambition. They passed with the greatest skill from joy to sorrow and they imitated nature so well that they could move one to laughter or to tears. Honey-Bee clapped her hands at the sight. She had a horror of the dolls who tried to be tyrants. On the other hand she felt a boundless compassion for a doll

who had once been a princess, and who, now a captive widow, had no other resource alas, by which to save her child, than to marry the barbarian who had made her a widow.

Honey-Bee never tired of this game which the dolls could vary indefinitely. The dwarfs also gave concerts and taught her to play the lute, the viola, the theorbo, the lyre, and various other instruments.

In short she became an excellent musician, and the dramas acted in the theatre by the dolls taught her a knowledge of men and life. King Loc was always present at the plays and the concerts, but he neither saw nor heard anything but Honey-Bee ; little by little he had set his whole heart upon her. In the meantime months passed and even years sped by and Honey-Bee was still among the dwarfs, always amused and yet always longing for earth. She grew to be a beautiful girl. Her singular destiny had imparted something strange to her appearance, which gave her, however, only an added charm

XII

In which the treasures of King Loc are described as well as the writer is able

XII

In which the treasures of King Loc are described as well as the writer is able

SIX years to a day had passed since Honey-Bee had come to live with the dwarfs. King Loc called her into his palace and commanded his treasurer to displace a huge stone which seemed cemented into the wall, but which in reality was only lightly placed there. All three passed through the opening left by the great stone and found themselves in a fissure of rock too narrow for two persons to stand abreast. King Loc preceded the others along the dim path and Honey-Bee followed him holding to a tip of the royal mantle. They walked on for a long time, and at intervals the sides of the rocks came so close together that the young girl was seized with terror lest she should be unable to advance or recede, and so would die there. Before her, along the dark and narrow road floated the mantle of

King Loc. At last King Loc came to a bronze door which he opened and out of which poured a blaze of light.

"Little King Loc," said Honey-Bee, "I had no idea that light could be so beautiful!"

And King Loc taking her by the hand led her into the hall out of which the light shone.

"See!" he cried.

Honey-Bee, dazzled, could see nothing, for this immense hall, supported by high marble columns, was a glitter of gold from floor to roof.

At the end on a dais made of glittering gems set in gold and silver, the steps of which were covered by a carpet of marvellous embroidery, stood a throne of ivory and gold under a canopy of translucent enamel, and on each side two palm-trees three thousand years old, in gigantic vases carved in some bygone time by the greatest artists among the dwarfs. King Loc mounted his throne and commanded the young girl to stand at his right hand.

"Honey-Bee," said King Loc, "these are my treasures. Choose all that will give you pleasure."

Immense gold shields hung from the columns and reflected the sunlight, and sent it back in glittering

rays; swords and lances crossed had each a flame at their point.

Tables along the walls were laden with tankards, flagons, ewers, chalices, pyxes, patens, goblets, gold cups, drinking-horns of ivory with silver rings, enormous bottles of rock crystal, chased gold and silver dishes, coffers, reliquaries in the form of churches, scent-boxes, mirrors, candelabra and torch-holders, equally beautiful in material and workmanship, and incense-burners in the shape of monsters. And on one table stood a chessboard with chessmen carved out of moonstones.

"Choose," King Loc repeated.

But lifting her eyes above these treasures, Honey-Bee saw the blue sky through an opening in the roof, and as if she had comprehended that the light of day could alone give all these things their splendour, she said simply:

"Little King Loc, I want to return to earth."

Whereupon King Loc made a sign to his treasurer who, raising heavy tapestries, disclosed an enormous iron-bound coffer covered with plates of open iron-work. This coffer being opened out poured thousands of rays of different and lovely tints, and each ray

seemed to leap out of a precious stone most artistically cut. King Loc dipped in his hands and there flowed in glittering confusion violet amethysts and virgins' stones, emeralds of three kinds, one dark green, another called the honey emerald because of its colour, and the third a bluish-green, also called beryl, which gives happy dreams; oriental topazes, rubies beautiful as the blood of heroes, dark blue sapphires, called the male sapphire, and the pale blue ones, called the female sapphire, the cymophanes, hyacinths, euclases, turquoises, opals whose light is softer than the dawn, the aquamarine and the Syrian garnet. All these gems were of the purest and most luminous water. And in the midst of these coloured fires great diamonds flashed their rays of dazzling white.

"Choose, Honey-Bee," said King Loc. But Honey-Bee shook her head.

"Little King Loc," she said, "I would rather have a single beam of sunlight that falls on the roof of Clarides than all these gems."

Then King Loc ordered another coffer to be opened, in which were only pearls. But these pearls were round and pure; their changing light reflected all the colours of sea and sky, and their radiance

was so tender that they seemed to express a thought of love.

"Accept these," said King Loc.

"Little King Loc," Honey-Bee replied, "these pearls are like the glance of George of Blanchelande; I love these pearls, but I love his eyes even more."

Hearing these words King Loc turned his head away. However he opened a third coffer and showed the young girl a crystal in which a drop of water had been imprisoned since the beginning of time; and when the crystal was moved the drop of water could be seen to stir. He also showed her pieces of yellow amber in which insects more brilliant than jewels had been imprisoned for thousands of years. One could distinguish their delicate feet and their fine antennæ, and they would have resumed their flight had some power but shattered like glass their perfumed prison.

"These are the great marvels of nature; I give them to you, Honey-Bee."

"Little King Loc," Honey-Bee replied, "keep your amber and your crystal, for I should not know how to give their freedom either to the fly or the drop of water."

King Loc watched her in silence for some time.

Then he said, " Honey-Bee, the most beautiful treasures will be safe in your keeping. You will possess them and they will not possess you. The miser is the prey of his gold, only those who despise wealth can be rich without danger ; their souls will always be greater than their riches."

Having uttered these words he made a sign to his treasurer who presented on a cushion a crown of gold to the young girl.

" Accept this jewel as a sign of our regard for you," said King Loc. " Henceforth you shall be called the Princess of the Dwarfs."

And he himself placed the crown on the head of Honey-Bee.

XIII

In which King Loc declares himself

XIII

In which King Loc declares himself

HE dwarfs celebrated the crowning of their first princess by joyous revels. Harmless and innocent games succeeded each other in the huge amphitheatre ; and the little men, with cockades of fern or two oak leaves fastened coquettishly to their hoods, bounded gaily across the subterranean streets. The rejoicings lasted thirty days. During the universal excitement Pic looked like a mortal inspired ; Tad the kind-hearted was intoxicated by the universal joy ; Dig the tender gave expression to his delight in tears ; Rug, in his ecstasy, again demanded that Honey-Bee should be put in a cage, but this time so that the dwarfs need not be afraid to lose so charming a princess ; Bob, mounted on his raven, filled the air with such cries of rapture that the sable bird, infected by the gaiety, gave vent to innumerable playful little croaks.

Only King Loc was sad.

On the thirtieth day, having given the princess and the dwarf people a festival of unparalleled magnificence, he mounted his throne, and so stood that his kind face just reached her ear.

"My Princess Honey-Bee," he said, "I am about to make a request which you are at liberty either to accept or to refuse. Honey-Bee of Clarides, Princess of the Dwarfs, will you be my wife?"

As he spoke, King Loc, grave and tender, had something of the gentle beauty of a majestic poodle.

"Little King Loc," Honey-Bee replied, as she pulled his beard, "I am willing to become your wife for fun, but never your wife for good. The moment you asked me to marry you I was reminded of Francœur, who when I was on earth used to amuse me by telling me the most ridiculous stories.'

At these words King Loc turned his head away, but not so soon but that Honey-Bee saw the tears in his eyes. Then Honey-Bee was grieved because she had pained him.

"Little King Loc," she said to him, "I love you for the little King Loc you are; and if you make me laugh as Francœur did, there is nothing in that to

vex you, for Francœur sang well and he would have been very handsome if it had not been for his grey hair and his red nose."

"Honey-Bee of Clarides, Princess of the Dwarfs," the king replied, "I love you in the hope that some day you will love me. And yet without that hope I should love you just the same. The only return I ask for my friendship is that you will always be honest with me."

"Little King Loc, I promise."

"Well then, tell me truly, Honey-Bee, do you love some one else enough to marry him?"

"Little King Loc, I love no one enough for that."

Whereupon King Loc smiled, and seizing his golden cup he proposed, with a resounding voice, the health of the Princess of the Dwarfs. An immense uproar rose from the depths of the earth, for the banquet table reached from one end to the other of the Empire of the Dwarfs.

XIV

In which we are told how Honey-Bee saw her mother again, but could not embrace her

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In which we are told how Honey-Bee saw her mother again, but could not embrace her

HONEY-BEE, a crown on her head, was now more often sad and lost in thought than when her hair flowed loose over her shoulders, and when she went laughing to the forge and pulled the beards of her good friends Pic, Tad and Dig, whose faces, red from the reflected flames, gave her a gay welcome. But now these good dwarfs, who had once danced her on their knees and called her Honey-Bee, bowed as she passed and maintained a respectful silence. She grieved because she was no longer a child, and she suffered because she was the Princess of the Dwarfs.

It was no longer a pleasure for her to see King Loc, since she had seen him weep because of her. But she loved him, for he was good and unhappy. One day, if one may say that there are days in the empire of the

dwarfs, she took King Loc by the hand and drew him under the cleft in the rock, through which a sunbeam shone, along whose rays there danced a haze of golden dust.

"Little King Loc," she said, "I suffer. You are a king and you love me and I suffer."

Hearing these words from the pretty damsel, King Loc replied :

"I love you, Honey-Bee of Clarides, Princess of the Dwarfs ; and that is why I have held you captive in our world, in order to teach you our secrets, which are greater and more wonderful than all those you could learn on earth amongst men, for men are less skilful and less learned than the dwarfs."

"Yes," said Honey-Bee, "but they are more like me than the dwarfs, and for that reason I love them better. Little King Loc, let me see my mother again if you do not wish me to die."

Without replying King Loc went away. Honey-Bee, desolate and alone, watched the ray of light which bathes the whole face of nature and which enfolds all the living, even to the beggars by the wayside, in its resplendent waves. Slowly this ray paled, and its golden radiance faded to a pale blue light. Night had

come upon earth. A star twinkled over the cleft in the rock.

Then some one gently touched her on the shoulder, and she saw King Loc wrapped in a black cloak. He had another cloak on his arm with which he covered the young girl.

"Come," said he.

And he led her out of the under-world. When she saw again the trees stirred by the wind, the clouds that floated across the moon, the splendour of the night so fresh and blue, when she breathed again the fragrance of the herbage, and when the air she had breathed in childhood again entered her breast in floods, she gave a great sigh and thought to die of joy.

King Loc had taken her in his arms; small though he was, he carried her as lightly as a feather, and they glided over the ground like the shadows of two birds.

"You shall see your mother again, Honey-Bee. But listen! You know that every night I send her your image. Every night she sees your dear phantom; she smiles upon it, she talks to it and she caresses it. To-night she shall, instead, see you yourself. You will see her, but you must not touch her, you must not

speak to her, or the charm will be broken and she will never again see you nor your image, which she does not distinguish from you."

"Then I will be prudent, alas! little King Loc! . . . See! See! . . ."

Sure enough the watch-tower of Clarides rose black on the hill. Honey-Bee had hardly time to throw a kiss to the beloved old stone walls when the ramparts of the town of Clarides, overgrown with gillyflowers already flew past; already she was ascending the terrace, where the glow-worms glimmer in the grass, to the postern, which King Loc easily opened, for the dwarfs are masters of metals, nor can locks, padlocks, bolts, chains or bars ever stop them.

She climbed the winding stairs that led to her mother's room, and she paused to clasp her beating heart with both her hands. Softly the door opened, and by the light of a night lamp that hung from the ceiling she saw her mother in the holy silence that reigned, her mother frailer and paler, with hair grey at the temples, but in the eyes of her daughter more beautiful even than in past days as she remembered her riding fearlessly in magnificent attire. As usual the mother beheld her daughter as in a dream, and she

opened her arms as if to caress her. And the child, laughing and sobbing, was about to throw herself into those open arms ; but King Loc tore her away, and like a wisp of straw he bore her through the blue landscape to the Kingdom of the Dwarfs.

XV

In which we shall see how King Loc suffered

XV

In which we shall see how King Loc suffered

SEATED on the granite step of the underground palace, Honey-Bee watched the blue sky through the cleft in the rock, and saw the elder-trees turn their spreading white parasols to the light. She began to weep.

"Honey-Bee," said King Loc as he took her hand in his, "why do you weep, and what is it you desire?"

And as she had been grieving these many days, the dwarfs at her feet tried to cheer her with simple airs on the flute, the flageolet, the rebeck, and the cymbals. And other dwarfs, to amuse her, turned such somersaults one after the other that they pricked the grass with the points of their hoods with their cockades of leaves, and nothing could be more charming than to watch the capers of these tiny men with their venerable beards. Tad so kind and Dig so wise, who had loved

her since the day they had found her asleep on the shore of the lake, and Pic, the elderly poet, gently took her arm and implored her to tell them the cause of her grief. Pau, a simple just soul, offered her a basket of grapes, and all of them gently pulled the edge of her skirt and said with King Loc:

"Honey-Bee, Princess of the Dwarfs, why do you weep?"

"Little King Loc," Honey-Bee replied, "and you, little men, my grief only increases your love, because you are good; you weep with me. Know that I weep when I think of George of Blanchelande, who should now be a cavalier, but whom I shall never see again. I love him and I wish to be his wife."

King Loc took his hand away from the hand he had pressed.

"Honey-Bee," he said, "why did you deceive me when you told me at the banquet that you loved no one else?"

"Little King Loc," Honey-Bee replied, "I did not deceive you at the banquet. At that time I had no desire to marry George of Blanchelande, but to-day it is my dearest wish that he should ask to marry me. But he will never ask me, as I do not know where he

PAU, A SIMPLE JUST SOUL, OFFERED HER A BASKET OF GRAPES

is, nor does he know where I am. And this is the reason I weep."

At these words the musicians ceased playing; the acrobats interrupted their tumbling and stood immovable, some on their heads and some on their haunches; Tad and Dig shed silent tears on the sleeve of Honey-Bee; Pau, simple soul, dropped his basket of grapes, and all the little men gave vent to the most fearful groans.

But King Loc, more unhappy than all under his splendid jewelled crown, silently withdrew, his mantle trailing behind him like a purple torrent.

XVI

In which an account is given of the Iearnea Nur who was the cause of such extraordinary joy to King Loc

XVI

In which an account is given of the learned Nur who was the cause of such extraordinary joy to King Loc

KING LOC did not permit the young girl to observe his weakness; but when he was alone he sat on the ground and with his feet in his hands gave way to grief He was jealous.

"She loves him," he said to himself, "and she does not love me! And yet I am a king and very wise; great treasures are mine and I know the most marvellous secrets. I am superior to all other dwarfs, who are in turn superior to all men. She does not love me but she loves a young man who not only has not the learning of the dwarfs, but no other learning either.

"It must be acknowledged that she does not appreciate merit—nor has she much sense. I ought to laugh at her want of judgment; but I love her and I care for nothing in the world because she does not love me."

For many long days King Loc roamed alone through the most desolate mountain passes, turning over in his mind thoughts both sad and, sometimes, wicked. He even thought of trying by imprisonment and starvation to force Honey-Bee to become his wife. But rejecting this plan as soon as formed he decided to go in search of her and throw himself at her feet. But he could come to no decision, and at last he was quite at a loss what to do. The truth being that whether Honey-Bee would love him did not depend on him.

Suddenly his anger turned against George of Blanchelande; and he hoped that the young man had been carried far away by some enchanter, and that at any rate, should he ever hear of Honey-Bee's love, he would disdain it.

"Without being old," the king meditated, "I have already lived too long not to have suffered sometimes. And yet my sufferings, intense though they were, were less painful than those of which I am conscious to-day. With the tenderness and pity which caused them was mingled something of their own divine sweetness. Now, on the contrary, my grief has the baseness and bitterness of an evil desire. My soul is desolate and the tears in my eyes are like an acid that burns them."

So thought King Loc. And fearing that jealousy might make him unjust and wicked he avoided meeting the young girl, for fear that in spite of himself, he might use towards her the language of a man either weak or brutal.

One day when he was more than ever tormented by the thought that Honey-Bee loved George, he decided to consult Nur, the most learned of all the dwarfs, who lived at the bottom of a well deep down in the bowels of the earth.

This well had the advantage of an even and soft temperature. It was not dark, for two little stars, a pale sun and a red moon, alternately illumined all parts. King Loc descended into the well and found Nur in his laboratory. Nur looked like a kind little old man, and he wore a sprig of wild thyme in his hood. In spite of his learning he had the innocence and candour characteristic of his race.

"Nur," said the king as he embraced him, "I have come to consult you because you know many things."

"King Loc," replied Nur, "I might know a good deal and yet be an idiot. But I possess the knowledge of how to learn some of the innumerable things I do

not know, and that is the reason I am so justly famous for my learning."

"Well, then," said King Loc, "can you tell me the whereabouts at present of a young man by the name of George of Blanchelande?"

"I do not know and I never cared to know," replied Nur. "Knowing as I do the ignorance, stupidity and wickedness of mankind, I don't trouble myself as to what they say or do. Humanity, King Loc, would be entirely deplorable and ridiculous if it were not that something of value is given to this proud and miserable race, inasmuch as the men are endowed with courage, the women with beauty, and the little children with innocence. Obliged by necessity, as are also the dwarfs, to toil, mankind has rebelled against this divine law, and instead of being, like ourselves, willing and cheerful toilers, they prefer war to work, and they would rather kill each other than help each other. But to be just one must admit that their shortness of life is the principal cause of their ignorance and cruelty. Their life is too short for them to learn how to live. The race of the dwarfs who dwell under the earth is happier and better. If we are not immortal we shall at least last as long as the earth which

bears us in her bosom, and which permeates us with her intimate and fruitful warmth, while for the races born on her rugged surface she has only the turbulent winds which sometimes scorch and sometimes freeze, and whose breath is at once the bearer of death and of life. And yet men owe to their overwhelming miseries and wickedness a virtue which makes the souls of some amongst them more beautiful than the souls of dwarfs. And this virtue, O King Loc, which for the mind is what the soft radiance of pearls is for the eyes, is pity. It is taught by suffering, and the dwarfs know it but little, because being wiser than men they escape much anguish. Yet sometimes the dwarfs leave their deep grottoes and seek the pitiless surface of the earth to mingle with men so as to love them, to suffer with them and through them, and thus to feel this pity which refreshes the soul like a heavenly dew. This is the truth concerning men, King Loc. But did you not ask me as to the exact fate of some one amongst them?"

King Loc having repeated his question, Nur looked into one of the many telescopes which filled the room. For the dwarfs have no books, those which are found amongst them have come from men, and are

only used as playthings. They do not learn as we do by consulting marks on paper, but they look through telescopes and see the subject itself of their inquiry. The only difficulty is to choose the right telescope and get the right focus.

There are telescopes of crystal, of topaz and of opal; but those whose lens is a great polished diamond are more powerful, and permit them to see the most distant objects.

The dwarfs also have lenses of a translucent substance unknown to men. These enable the sight to pass through rocks and walls as if they were glass. Others, more remarkable still, reconstruct as accurately as a mirror all that has vanished with the flight of time. For the dwarfs, in the depths of their caverns, have the power to recall from the infinite surface of the ether the light of immemorial days and the forms and colours of vanished times. They can create for themselves a phantasm of the past by re-arranging the splinters of light which were once shattered against the forms of men, animals, plants and rocks, so that they again flash across the centuries through the unfathomable ether.

The venerable Nur excelled in discovering figures

of antiquity and even such, inconceivable though it may seem, as lived before the earth had assumed the shape with which we are familiar. So it was really no trouble at all for him to find George of Blanchelande.

Having looked for a moment through a very ordinary telescope indeed, he said to King Loc:

"King Loc, he for whom you search is with the nixies in their palace of crystal, from which none ever return, and whose iridescent walls adjoin your kingdom."

"Is he there?" cried the king. "Let him stay!" and he rubbed his hands. "I wish him joy."

And having embraced the venerable dwarf, he emerged out of the well roaring with laughter.

The whole length of the road he held his sides so as to laugh at his ease; his head shook, and his beard swung backwards and forwards on his stomach. How he laughed! The little men who met him laughed out of sheer sympathy. Seeing them laugh made others laugh. A contagion of laughter spread from place to place until the whole interior of the earth was shaken as if with a mighty and jovial hiccough. Ha! ha! ha!

XVII

Which tells of the wonderful adventure of George of Blanchelance

XVII

Which tells of the wonderful adventure of George of Blanchelande

ING LOC did not laugh long; indeed he hid the face of a very unhappy little man under the bed-clothes.

He lay awake all night long thinking of George of Blanchelande, the prisoner of the nixies.

So about the hour when such of the dwarfs as have a dairymaid for sweetheart go in her stead to milk the cows while she sleeps in her white bed with folded hands, little King Loc again sought the astute Nur in the depths of his well.

"You did not tell me, Nur, what he is doing down there with the nixies?"

The venerable Nur was quite convinced that the king was mad, though that did not alarm him because he knew if King Loc should lose his reason he would

be a most gracious, charming, amiable and kindly lunatic. The madness of the dwarfs is gentle like their reason, and full of the most delicious fancies. But King Loc was not mad; at least not more so than lovers usually are.

"I wish to speak of George of Blanchelande," he said to the venerable Nur, who had forgotten all about this young man as soon as possible.

Thereupon Nur the wise placed a series of lenses and mirrors before the king in an order so exact that it looked like disorder, but which enabled him to show the king in a mirror the form of George of Blanchelande as he was when the nixies carried him away. By a lucky choice and a skilful adjustment of instruments the dwarf was able to reproduce for the love-sick king all the adventures of the son of that Countess to whom a white rose announced her end. And the following, expressed in words, is what the little man saw in all the reality of form and colour.

When George was borne away in the icy arms of the daughters of the lake the water pressed upon his eyes and his breast and he felt that he was about to die. And yet he heard songs that sounded like a caress and his whole being was permeated by a sense of delicious

ONLY THE SONGS AND THE DANCES AND THE LOVE OF THE NIXIES

freshness. When he opened his eyes he found himself in a grotto whose crystal columns reflected the delicate tints of the rainbow. At the end of the grotto was a great sea shell of mother-of-pearl iridescent with the tenderest colours, and this served as a dais to the throne of coral and seaweed of the Queen of the Nixies. But the face of the Sovereign of the waters shone with a light more tender than either the mother-of-pearl or the crystal. She smiled at the child which her women brought her, and her green eyes lingered long upon him.

"Friend," she said at last, "be welcome into our world, in which you shall be spared all sorrow. For you neither dry lessons nor rough sports; nothing coarse shall remind you of earth and its toil, for you only the songs and the dances and the love of the nixies."

And indeed the women of the green hair taught the child music and dancing and a thousand graces. They loved to bind his forehead with the cockle shells that decked their own tresses. But he, remembering his country, gnawed his clenched hands with impatience.

Years passed and George longed with a passion unceasing to see the earth again, the rude earth where

the sun burns and where the snow hardens, the mother earth where one suffers, where one loves, the earth where he had seen Honey-Bee, and where he longed to see her again. He had in the meantime grown to be a tall lad with a fine golden down on his upper lip. Courage came with the beard, and so one day he presented himself before the Queen of the Nixies and bowing low, said :

" Madam, I have come, with your gracious permission, to take leave of you ; I am about to return to Clarides."

" Fair youth," the queen replied smiling, " I cannot grant you the leave you ask, for I guard you in my crystal palace, to make of you my lover."

" Madam," he replied, " I am not worthy of so great an honour."

" That is but your courtesy. What gallant cavalier ever believes that he has sufficiently deserved his lady's favour. Besides you are still too young to know your own worth. Let me tell you, fair youth, that we do but desire your welfare ; obey your lady and her alone."

" Madam, I love Honey-Bee of Clarides. I will have no other lady but her."

"A mortal maid!" the queen cried, turning pale, but more beautiful still, "a coarse daughter of men, this Honey-Bee! How can you love such a thing?"

"I do not know, but I know that I love her."

"Never mind. It will pass."

And she still held the young man captive by means of the allurements of her crystal abode.

He did not comprehend the devious thing called a woman; he was more like Achilles among the daughters of Lycomedes than Tannhaüser in the enchanted castle. And that is why he wandered sadly along the walls of the mighty palace searching for an outlet through which to escape; but he only saw the splendid and silent empire of the waves sealing his shining prison. Through the transparent walls he watched the blooming sea anemones and the spreading coral, while over the delicate streams of the madrepores and the sparkling shells, purple, blue, and gold fishes made a glitter of stars with a stroke of their tails. These marvels he left unheeded, for, lulled by the delicious songs of the nixies, he felt little by little his will broken and his soul grow weak. He was all indolence and indifference when one day he found by chance in a gallery of the palace, an ancient well-worn

book bound in pigskin and studded with great copper nail-heads. The book, saved from some wreck in mid-ocean, treated of chivalry and fair ladies, and related at great length the adventures of heroes who went about the world redressing wrongs, protecting widows and succouring orphans for the love of justice and in honour of beauty. George flushed and paled with wonder, shame, and anger as he read these tales of splendid adventures. He could not contain himself.

"I also," he cried, "will be a gallant knight. I also will go about the world punishing the wicked and succouring the unfortunate for the good of mankind and in the name of my lady Honey-Bee."

With sword drawn and his heart big with valour he dashed across the crystal dwellings. The white ladies fled and swooned before him like the silver ripples of a lake. Their queen alone beheld his approach without a tremor; she turned on him the icy glance of her green eyes.

"Break the enchantment which binds me," he cried, running towards her. "Open to me the road to earth. I wish to fight in the light of the sun like a cavalier. I wish to return to where one loves, to where one suffers, to where one struggles! Give back

to me the life that is real and the light that is real. Give me back my prowess! If not, I will kill you, you wicked woman!"

With a smile she shook her head as if to refuse. Beautiful she was and serene. With all the strength that was in him George struck her; but his sword broke against her glittering breast.

"Child!" she said, and she commanded that he be cast into a dungeon which formed a kind of crystal tunnel under her palace, and about which sharks roamed with wide-stretched monstrous jaws armed with triple rows of pointed teeth. At every touch it seemed as if they must crush the frail glass wall, which made it impossible to sleep in this strange prison.

The extremity of this under-sea tunnel rested on a bed of rock which formed the vaulting of the most distant and unexplored cavern in the empire of the dwarfs.

And this is what the two little men saw in a single hour and quite as accurately as if they had followed George all the days of his life. The venerable Nur, having described the dungeon scene in all its tragic gloom, addressed the King in much the same

way as the Savoyards speak to the little children when they show their magic lanterns.

"King Loc," he said, "I have shown you all you wished to see, and now that you know all I can add nothing more. It's nothing to me whether you liked what you saw; it is enough to know that what you saw was the truth. Science neither cares to please nor to displease. She is inhuman. It is not science but poetry that charms and consoles. And that is why poetry is more necessary than science. Go, King Loc, and get them to sing you a song."

And without uttering a word King Loc left the well.

XVIII

In which King Loc undertakes a terrible journey

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In which King Loc undertakes a terrible journey

AVING left the well of wisdom, King Loc went to his treasure house and out of a casket, of which he alone had the key, he took a ring which he placed on his finger. The stone set in the ring emitted a brilliant light, for it was a magic stone of whose power we shall learn more further on. Thereupon King Loc went to his palace, put on a travelling cloak and thick boots and took a stick; then he started on a journey across crowded streets, great highways, villages, galleries of porphyry, torrents of rock-oil, and crystal grottoes, all of which communicated with each other through narrow openings.

He seemed lost in deep meditation and he uttered words that had no meaning. But he trudged on doggedly. Mountains obstructed his path and he climbed the mountains. Precipices opened under his

feet and he descended into the precipices; he forded streams, he crossed horrible regions black with the fumes of sulphur. He trudged across burning lava on which his feet left their imprint; he had the appearance of a desperately dogged traveller. He penetrated into gloomy caverns into which the water of the ocean oozed drop by drop, and flowed like tears along the sea wrack, forming pools on the uneven ground where countless crustaceans increased and multiplied into hideous shapes. Enormous crabs, crayfish, giant lobsters and sea spiders crackled under the dwarf's feet, then crawled away leaving some of their claws behind, and in their flight rousing horrible molluscs and octopuses centuries old that suddenly writhed their hundred arms and spat fetid poison out of their bird-beaks. And yet King Loc went on undaunted. He made his way to the ends of these caverns, through the midst of a heaped up chaos of shelled monsters armed with spikes, with double saw-edged nippers, with claws that crept stealthily up to his neck and bleared eyes on swaying tentacles. He crept up the sides of the cavern by clinging to the rough surface of the rocks and the mailed monsters crept with him, but he never faltered until he recognised by touch a stone that projected from

HE PENETRATED INTO GLOOMY CAVERNS

the centre of the natural arch. He touched the stone with his magic ring and suddenly it rolled away with a horrible crash, and at once a glory of light flooded the cavern with its beautiful waves and put to flight the swarming monsters bred in its gloom.

As King Loc thrust his head into the opening through which daylight poured, he saw George of Blanchelande in his glass dungeon where he was lamenting grievously as he thought of Honey-Bee and of earth. For King Loc had undertaken this subterranean journey only to deliver the captive of the nixies.

But seeing this huge dishevelled head, frowning and bearded, watching him from under his tunnel, George believed himself to be menaced by a mighty danger and he felt for the sword at his side forgetting that he had broken it against the breast of the woman with the green eyes. In the meantime King Loc examined him curiously.

"Bah," said he to himself, "it is only a child!"

And indeed he was only an ignorant child, and it was because of his great ignorance that he had escaped from the deadly and delicious kisses of the Queen of the Nixies. Aristotle with all his wisdom might not have done so well.

"What do you want, fathead?" George cried, seeing himself defenceless, "why harm me if I have never harmed you?"

"Little one," King Loc replied in a voice at once jovial and testy, "you do not know whether or not you have harmed me, for you are ignorant of effects and causes and reflections, and all philosophy in general. But we'll not talk of that. If you don't mind leaving your tunnel, come this way."

George at once crept into the cavern, slipped down the length of the wall, and as soon as he had reached the bottom he said to his deliverer:

"You are a good little man; I shall love you for ever; but do you know where Honey-Bee of Clarides is?"

"I know a great many things," retorted the dwarf, "and especially that I don't like people who ask questions."

Hearing this George paused in great confusion and followed his guide in silence through the dense black air where the octopuses and crustaceans writhed. King Loc said mockingly:

"This is not a carriage road, young prince."

"Sir," George replied, "the road to liberty is

always beautiful, and I fear not to be led astray when I follow my benefactor."

Little King Loc bit his lips. On reaching the gallery of porphyry he pointed out to the youth a flight of steps cut in the rock by the dwarfs, by which they ascend to earth.

"This is your way," he said, "farewell."

"Do not bid me farewell," George replied, "say I shall see you again. After what you have done my life is yours."

"What I have done," King Loc replied, "I have not done for your sake, but for another's. It will be better for us never to meet again, for we can never be friends."

"I would not have believed that my deliverance could have caused me such pain," George said simply and gravely, "and yet it does. Farewell."

"A pleasant journey," cried King Loc, in a gruff voice.

Now it happened that these steps of the dwarfs adjoined a deserted stone quarry less than a mile from the castle of Clarides.

"This young lad," King Loc murmured as he went on his way, "has neither the wisdom nor the wealth

of the dwarfs. Truly I cannot imagine why Honey-Bee loves him, unless it is because he is young, handsome, faithful and brave."

As he went back to the town he laughed to himself as a man does who has done some one a good turn. As he passed Honey-Bee's cottage he thrust his big head into the open window just as he had thrust it into the crystal tunnel, and he saw the young girl, who was embroidering a veil with silver flowers.

"I wish you joy, Honey-Bee," he cried.

"And you also, little King Loc, seeing you have nothing to wish for and nothing to regret."

He had much to wish for, but, indeed, he had nothing to regret. And it was probably this which gave him such a good appetite for supper. Having eaten a huge number of truffled pheasants he called Bob.

"Bob," said he, "mount your raven; go to the Princess of the Dwarfs and tell her that George of Blanchelande, long a captive of the nixies, has this day returned to Clarides."

Thus he spoke and Bob flew off on his raven.

XIX

Which tells of the extraordinary encounter of Jean the master tailor, and of the blessed song the birds in the grove sang to the duchess

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Which tells of the extraordinary encounter of Jean the master tailor, and of the blessed song the birds in the grove sang to the duchess

HEN George again found himself on the earth on which he was born, the very first person he met was Jean, the master tailor, with a red suit of clothes on his arm for the steward of the castle. The good man shrieked at sight of his young master.

"Holy St. James," he cried, "if you are not his lordship George of Blanchelande who was drowned in the lake seven years ago, you are either his ghost or the devil in person."

"I am neither ghost nor devil, good Jean, but I am truly that same George of Blanchelande who used to creep to your shop and beg bits of stuff out of which to make dresses for the dolls of my sister Honey-Bee."

"Then you were not drowned, your lordship," the good man exclaimed. "I am so glad! And how well you look. My little Peter who climbed into my arms to see you pass on horseback by the side of the Duchess that Sunday morning has become a good workman and a fine fellow. He is all of that, God be praised, your lordship. He will be glad to hear that you are not at the bottom of the sea, and that the fish have not eaten you as he always declared. He was in the habit of saying many pleasant things about it, your lordship, for he is very amusing. And it is a fact that you are much mourned in Clarides. You were such a promising child. I shall remember to my dying day how you once asked me for a needle to sew with, and as I refused, for you were not of an age to use it without danger, you replied you would go to the woods and pick beautiful green pine needles. That is what you said, and it still makes me laugh. Upon my soul you said that. Our little Peter, also, used to say clever things. Now he is a cooper and at your service, your lordship."

"I shall employ no one else. But give me news of Honey-Bee and the Duchess, Master Jean."

"Alack, where do you come from, your lordship,

seeing that you do not know that it is now seven years since the Princess Honey-Bee was stolen by the dwarfs of the mountain? She disappeared the very day you were drowned; and one can truly say that on that day Clarides lost its sweetest flowers. The Duchess is in deep mourning. And it's that which makes me say that the great of the earth have their sorrows just as well as the humblest artisans, if only to prove that we are all the sons of Adam. And because of this a cat may well look at a king, as the saying is. And by the same token the good Duchess has seen her hair grow white and her gaiety vanish. And when in the springtime she walks in her black robes along the hedgerow where the birds sing, the smallest of these is more to be envied than the sovereign lady of Clarides. And yet her grief is not quite without hope, your lordship; for though she had no tidings of you, she at least knows by dreams that her daughter Honey-Bee is alive."

This and much else said good man Jean, but George listened no longer after he heard that Honey-Bee was a captive among the dwarfs.

"The dwarfs hold Honey-Bee captive under the earth," he pondered; "a dwarf rescued me from my crystal dungeon; these little men have not all the same

customs ; my deliverer cannot be of the same race as those who stole my sister."

He knew not what to think except that he must rescue Honey-Bee.

In the meantime they crossed the town, and on their way the gossips standing on the thresholds of their houses asked each other who was this young stranger, but they all agreed that he was very handsome. The better informed amongst them, having recognised the young lord of Blanchelande, decided that it must be his ghost, wherefore they fled, making great signs of the cross.

" He must be sprinkled with holy water," said one old crone, " and he will vanish leaving a disgusting smell of sulphur. He will carry away Master Jean, and he will of course plunge him alive into the fire of hell."

" Softly ! old woman," a citizen replied, " his lordship is alive and much more alive than you or I. He is as fresh as a rose, and he looks as if he had come from some noble court rather than from the other world. One does return from afar, good dame. As witness Francœur the squire who came back from Rome last midsummer day."

And Margaret the helmet-maker, having greatly

admired George, mounted to her maiden chamber and kneeling before the image of the Holy Virgin prayed, "Holy Virgin, grant me a husband who shall look precisely like this young lord."

So each in his way talked of George's return until the news spread from mouth to mouth and finally reached the ears of the Duchess who was walking in the orchard. Her heart beat violently and she heard all the birds in the hedge-row sing :

"Cui, cui, cui,
Oui, oui, oui,
Georges de Blanchelande,
Cui, cui, cui.
Dont vous avez nourri l'enfance
Cui, cui, cui,
Est ici, est ici, est ici !
Oui, oui, oui."

Francœur approached her respectfully and said :

"Your Grace, George de Blanchelande whom you thought dead has returned. I shall make it into a song."

In the meantime the birds sang :

"Cucui, cui, i, cui, cui, cui,
Oui, oui, oui, oui, oui, oui,
Il est ici, ici, ici, ici, ici, ici."

And when she saw the child who had been to her as a son, she opened her arms and fell senseless at his feet.

XX

Which treats of a little satin shoe

XX

Which treats of a little satin shoe

EVERYBODY in Clarides was quite convinced that Honey-Bee had been stolen by the dwarfs. Even the Duchess believed it, though her dreams did not tell her precisely.

"We will find her again," said George.

"We will find her again," replied Francœur.

"And we will bring her back to her mother," said George.

"And we will bring her back," replied Francœur.

"And we will marry her," said George.

"And we will marry her," replied Francœur.

And they inquired among the inhabitants as to the habits of the dwarfs and the mysterious circumstances of Honey-Bee's disappearance.

And it so happened that they questioned Nurse Maurille who had once been the nurse of the Duchess

of Clarides; but now as she had no more milk for babies Maurille instead nursed the chickens in the poultry yard. It was there that the master and squire found her. She cried: "Psit! Psit! psit! psit! lil—lil—lil—lil—psit, psit, psit, psit!" as she threw grain to the chicks.

"Psit, psit, psit, psit! Is it you, your lordship? Psit, psit, psit! Is it possible that you have grown so tall—psit! and so handsome? Psit, psit! Shoo! shoo, shoo! Just look at that fat one there eating the little one's portion! Shoo, shoo, shoo! The way of the world, your lordship. Riches go to the rich, lean ones grow leaner, while the fat ones grow fatter. There's no justice on earth! What can I do for you, my lord? May I offer you each a glass of beer?"

"We will accept it gladly, Maurille, and I must embrace you because you nursed the mother of her whom I love best on earth."

"That's true, my lord, my foster child cut her first tooth at the age of six months and fourteen days. On which occasion the deceased duchess made me a present. She did indeed."

"Now, Maurille, tell us all you know about the dwarfs who carried away Honey-Bee.'

"Alas, my lord, I know nothing of the dwarfs who carried her away. And how can you expect an old woman like me to know anything? It's ages ago since I forgot the little I ever knew, and I haven't even enough memory left to remember where I put my spectacles. Sometimes I look for them when they're on my nose. Try this drink; it's fresh."

"Here's to your health, Maurille; but I was told that your husband knew something about the disappearance of Honey-Bee."

"That's true, your lordship. Though he never was taught anything he learnt a great deal in the pot-houses and the taverns. And he never forgot anything. Why if he were alive now and sitting at this table he could tell you stories until to-morrow. He used to tell me so many that they quite muddled my head and even now I can't tell the tail of one from the head of the other. That's true, your lordship."

Indeed, it was true, for the head of the old nurse could only be compared to a cracked soup-pot. It was with the greatest difficulty that George and Francœur got anything good out of it. Finally, however, by means of much repetition they did extract a tale which began somewhat as follows:

It's seven years ago, your lordship, the very day you and Honey-Bee went on that frolic from which neither of you ever returned. My deceased husband went up the mountain to sell a horse. That's the truth. He fed the beast with a good peck of oats soaked in cider to give him a firm leg and a brilliant eye; he took him to market near the mountain. He had no cause to regret his oats or his cider, for he sold his horse for a much better price. Beasts are like human beings; one judges them by their appearance. My deceased husband was so rejoiced at his good stroke of business that he invited his friends to drink with him, and glass in hand he drank to their health.

"You must know, your lordship, that there wasn't a man in all Clarides could equal my husband when glass in hand he drank to the health of his friends. So much so that on that day, after a number of such compliments, when he returned alone at twilight he took the wrong road for the reason that he could not recognise the right one. Finding himself near a cavern he saw as distinctly as possible, considering his condition and the hour, a crowd of little men carrying a girl or a boy on a litter. He ran away for fear of ill-luck; for the wine had not robbed him of prudence. But at

some distance from the cavern he dropped his pipe, and on stooping to pick it up he picked up instead a little satin shoe. When he was in a good humour he used to amuse himself by saying, 'It's the first time a pipe has changed into a shoe.' And as it was the shoe of a little girl he decided that she who had lost it in the forest was the one who had been carried away by the dwarfs and that it was this he had seen. He was about to put the shoe into his pocket when a crowd of little men in hoods pounced down on him and gave him such a thrashing that he lay there quite stunned."

"Maurille! Maurille!" cried George, "it's Honey-Bee's shoe. Give it to me and I will kiss it a thousand times. It shall rest for ever on my heart, and when I die it shall be buried with me."

"As you please, your lordship; but where will you find it? The dwarfs took it away from my poor husband and he always thought that they only gave him such a sound thrashing because he wanted to put it in his pocket to show to the magistrates. He used to say when he was in a good humour——"

"Enough—enough! Only tell me the name of the cavern!"

"It is called the cavern of the dwarfs, your lordship, and very well named too. My deceased husband——"

"Not another word, Maurille! But you. Francœur, do you know where this cavern is?"

"Your lordship," replied Francœur as he emptied the pot of beer, "you would certainly know it if you knew my songs better. I have written at least a dozen about this cavern, and I've described it without even forgetting a single sprig of moss. I venture to say, your lordship, that of these dozen songs, six are of great merit. And even the other six are not to be despised. I will sing you one or two. . . .

"Francœur," cried George, "we will take possession of this cavern of the dwarfs and rescue Honey-Bee."

"Of course we will!" replied Francœur.

XXI

In which a perilous adventure is described

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In which a perilous adventure is described

HAT night when all were asleep George and Francœur crept into the lower hall in search of weapons. Lances, swords, dirks, broadswords, hunting-knives and daggers glittered under the time-stained rafters—everything necessary to kill both man and brute. A complete suit of armour stood upright under each beam in an attitude as resolute and proud as if it were still filled with the soul of the brave man it had once decked for mighty adventures. The gauntlet grasped the lance in its ten iron fingers, while the shield rested against the plates of the greaves as if to prove that prudence is necessary to courage, and that the best fighter is armed as well for defence as for attack.

From among all these suits of armour George chose the one that Honey-Bee's father had worn as far away as the isles of Avalon and Thule. He donned it

with the aid of Francœur, nor did he forget the shield on which was emblazoned the golden sun of Clarides. As for Francœur, he put on a good old steel coat of mail of his grandfather's and on his head a casque of a bygone time, to which he attached a ragged and moth-eaten tuft or plume. This he chose merely as a matter of fancy and to give himself an air of rejoicing, for, as he justly reasoned, gaiety, which is good under every circumstance, is especially so in the face of great dangers.

Having thus armed themselves they passed under the light of the moon into the dark open country. Francœur had fastened the horses on the edge of a little grove near the postern, and there he found them nibbling at the bark of the bushes; they were swift steeds, and it took them less than an hour to reach the mountain of the dwarfs, through a crowd of goblins and phantoms.

"Here is the cave," said Francœur.

Master and man dismounted and, sword in hand, penetrated into the cavern. It required great courage to attempt such an adventure; but George was in love and Francœur was faithful, and this was a case in which one could say with the most delightful of poets:

"What may not friendship do with Love for guide!"

Master and man had trudged through the gloom for nearly an hour when they were astonished to see a brilliant light. It was one of the meteors which we know illumines the kingdom of the dwarfs. By the light of this subterranean luminary they discovered that they were standing at the foot of an ancient castle.

"This," said George, "is the castle we must capture."

"To be sure," said Francœur; "but first permit me to drink a few drops of this wine which I brought with me as a precaution, because the better the wine the better the man, and the better the man the better the lance, the better the lance the less dangerous the enemy."

George, seeing no living soul, struck the hilt of his sword sharply against the door of the castle. He looked up at the sound of a little tremulous voice, and he saw at one of the windows a little old man with a long beard, who asked:

"Who are you!"

"George of Blanchelande."

"And who do you want?"

"I have come to deliver Honey-Bee of Clarides

whom you unjustly hold captive in your mole-hill, hideous little moles that you are!"

The dwarf disappeared and again George was left alone with Francœur who said to him:

"Your lordship, possibly I may exaggerate if I remark that in your answer to the dwarf you have not quite exhausted all the persuasive powers of eloquence."

Francœur was afraid of nothing, but he was old; his heart like his head was polished by age, and he disliked to offend people.

As for George he stormed and clamoured at the top of his voice.

"Vile dwellers in the earth, moles, badgers, dormice, ferrets, and water-rats, open the door and I'll cut off all your ears."

But hardly had he uttered these words when the bronze door of the castle slowly opened of itself, for no one could be seen pushing back its enormous wings.

George was seized with terror and yet he sprang through the mysterious door because his courage was even greater than his terror. Entering the courtyard he saw that all the windows, the galleries, the roofs, the gables, the skylights, and even the chimney-pots,

were crowded with dwarfs armed with bows and cross-bows.

He heard the bronze door close behind him and suddenly a shower of arrows fell thick and fast on his head and shoulders, and for the second time he was filled with a great fear, and for the second time he conquered his fear.

Sword in hand and his shield on his arm he mounted the steps until suddenly he perceived on the very highest, a majestic dwarf who stood there in serene dignity, gold sceptre in hand and wearing the royal crown and the purple mantle. And in this dwarf he recognised the little man who had delivered him out of his crystal dungeon.

Thereupon he threw himself at his feet and cried weeping :

" O my benefactor, who are you ? Are you one of those who have robbed me of Honey-Bee, whom I love ? "

" I am King Loc," replied the dwarf. " I have kept Honey-Bee with me to teach her the wisdom of the dwarfs. Child, you have fallen into my kingdom like a hail-storm in a garden of flowers. But the dwarfs, less weak than men, are never angered as are

they. My intelligence raises me too high above you for me to resent your actions whatever they are. And of all the attributes that render me superior to you that which I guard most jealously is justice. Honey-Bee shall be brought before me and I will ask her if she wishes to follow you. This I do, not because you desire it, but because I must."

A great silence ensued and Honey-Bee appeared attired all in white and with flowing golden hair. No sooner did she see George than she ran and threw herself in his arms and clasped his iron breast with all her strength.

Then King Loc said to her :

"Honey-Bee, is it true that this is the man you wish to marry ?"

"It is true, very true that this is he, little King Loc," replied Honey-Bee. "See, all you little men, how I laugh and how happy I am."

And she began to weep. Her tears fell on her lover's face, but they were tears of joy ; and with them were mingled tiny bursts of laughter and a thousand endearing words without sense, like the lisp of a little child. She quite forgot that the sight of her joy might sadden the heart of King Loc.

"My beloved," said George, "I find you again such as I had longed for: the fairest and dearest of beings. You love me! Thank heaven, you love me! But, Honey-Bee, do you not also love King Loc a little, who delivered me out of the glass dungeon in which the nixies held me captive far away from you?"

Honey-Bee turned to King Loc.

"Little King Loc, and did you do this?" she cried. "You loved me, and yet you rescued the one I love and who loves me——"

Words failed her and she fell on her knees, her head in her hands.

All the little men who witnessed this scene deluged their cross-bows with tears. Only King Loc remained serene. And Honey-Bee, overcome by his magnanimity and his goodness, felt for him the love of a daughter for a father.

She took her lover's hand.

"George," she said, "I love you. God knows how much I love you. But how can I leave little King Loc?"

"Hallo, there?" King Loc cried in a terrible voice, "now you are my prisoners!"

But this terrible voice he only used for fun and just

as a joke, for he really was not at all angry. Here Francœur approached and knelt before him.

"Sire," he cried, "may it please your Majesty to let me share the captivity of the masters I serve?"

Said Honey-Bee, recognising him:

"Is it you, my good Francœur? How glad I am to see you again. What a horrid cap you've got on! Tell me, have you composed any new songs?"

And King Loc took them all three to dinner.

XXII

In which all ends well

XXII

In which all ends well

THE next morning Honey-Bee, George and Francœur again arrayed themselves in the splendid garments prepared for them by the dwarfs, and proceeded to the banquet-hall where, as he had promised, King Loc, in the robes of an Emperor, soon joined them. He was followed by his officers fully armed, and covered with furs of barbarous magnificence, and in their helmets the wings of swans. Crowds of hurrying dwarfs came in through the windows, the air-holes and the chimneys, and rolled under the benches.

King Loc mounted a stone table one end of which was laden with flagons, candelabra, tankards, and cups of gold of marvellous workmanship. He signed to Honey-Bee and to George to approach.

"Honey-Bee," he said, "by a law of the nation of the dwarfs it is decreed that a stranger received in our

midst shall be free after seven years. You have been with us seven years, Honey-Bee, and I should be a disloyal citizen and a blameworthy king should I keep you longer. But before permitting you to go I wish, not having been able to wed you myself, to betroth you to the one you have chosen. I do so with joy for I love you more than I love myself, and my pain, if such remains, is like a little cloud which your happiness will dispel. Honey-Bee of Clarides, Princess of the Dwarfs, give me your hand, and you, George of Blanchelande, give me yours."

Placing the hand of George in the hand of Honey-Bee he turned to his people and said with a ringing voice:

"Little men, my children, you bear witness that these two pledge themselves to marry one another on earth. They shall go back together and together help courage, modesty, and fidelity to blossom, as roses, pinks, and peonies bloom for good gardeners."

At these words the dwarfs burst into a mighty shout, but not knowing if they ought to grieve or to rejoice, they were torn by conflicting emotions.

King Loc, again turning to the lovers, said as he pointed to the flagons, the tankards, all the beautiful art of the goldsmith:

"Behold the gifts of the dwarfs. Take them, Honey-Bee, they will remind you of your little friends. It is their gift to you, not mine. What I am about to give you, you shall know before long."

A lengthy silence ensued.

With an expression sublime in its tenderness, King Loc gazed at Honey-Bee, whose beautiful and radiant head, crowned by roses, rested on her lover's shoulder.

Then he continued:

"My children, it is not enough to love passionately; you must also love well. A passionate love is good doubtless, but a beautiful love is better. May you have as much strength as gentleness; may it lack nothing, not even forbearance, and let even a little compassion be mingled with it. You are young, fair and good; but you are human, and because of this capable of much suffering. If then something of compassion does not enter into the feelings you have one for the other, these feelings will not always befit all the circumstances of your life together; they will be like festive robes that will not shield you from wind and rain. We love truly only those we love even in their weakness and their poverty. To forbear, to forgive, to console, that alone is the science of love."

King Loc paused, seized by a gentle but strong emotion.

"My children," he then continued; "may you be happy; guard your happiness well, guard it well."

While he addressed them Pic, Tad, Dig, Bob, Truc, and Pau clung to Honey-Bee's white mantle and covered her hands and arms with kisses and they implored her not to leave them. Thereupon King Loc took from his girdle a ring set with a glittering gem. It was the magic ring which had unclosed the dungeon of the nixies. He placed it on Honey-Bee's finger.

"Honey-Bee," he said, "receive from my hand this ring which will permit you, you and your husband, to enter at any hour the kingdom of the dwarfs. You will be welcomed with joy and succoured at need. In return teach the children that will be yours not to despise the little men, so innocent and industrious, who dwell under the earth."

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